



When Jesus inaugurated the Church nearly 2000 years ago, he called a rag-tag group of sinners to follow his teaching about God’s Kingdom and live under the direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The members of this movement were given the name Christians or “little Christs” and over time they became a large religion known as Christianity. When the Church is at its best, we are in alignment with God’s Kingdom and we are used by God to expand the reach of his Kingdom, drawing more and more into the orbit of God’s Grace. Christianity is a Blessing. However, The Church is full of humans, and humans are sinful. When our corporate sin as a Church misrepresents the Kingdom, it harms others, pushes people away, and becomes more reflective of the curse. Join us as we explore the biblical roots of the Church, its purpose, and God’s heart for us.

## GETTING STARTED

If your group has new people, introduce yourself, and explain what brought you to this group.

Take some time to discuss your group covenant—guidelines and expectations. Use the one found [here](#) or create your own.

## ICEBREAKER CHOOSE ONE

- How did you feel about church or Christianity as you were growing up?
- How did you meet Jesus? What role has the church played in growing your relationship with Jesus?

## SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

- Read Matthew 16:13–18. Jesus promises to build his church upon Peter’s statement about his identity. What else does he promise in this passage? How have you seen these promises at work in the Church?
- Have you ever felt the Church, or people in it, misrepresented God or let you down? How did you respond?
- In Matthew 6:10 Jesus teaches us to pray for the Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. How would you articulate the relationship between God’s Kingdom and Christianity?
- Read Acts 2:1–6 and 2:42–47. What do you notice about the first Church and its commitments? From these observations, what can we be mindful of today in our own lives?

## LIVE IT OUT

Over the next week have a conversation with someone from a different church or denomination. What beliefs and experiences do you have in common? What did you learn from one another?

## CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE *VISIO DIVINA*

Spend 5 minutes reflecting on the image of Jesus washing feet. What do you notice about the figures? How might this image inform your understanding of what it means to be Kingdom representatives in the world? Imagine how you might create the same impression upon others.

## PRAYER

Gracious God, you designed your Church to be the wellspring of your Kingdom Grace on earth. We confess that the expressions of our faith have missed the mark at times and we have not lived or prayed as though your kingdom should come on earth as it is in heaven. Forgive us. Help us to be aligned with your heart for the world. Fill us with your Holy Spirit and use us to convey your Grace to everyone we meet. Amen.